



Parent Resources

Process Your Emotions in Prayer

I read something recently that really challenged me: “Every emotion we experience as people should be processed in prayer.” Be honest, how many of us do soul inventory of what we feel in the context of prayer? Conversations, yes. Venting to a friend, spouse, or child, yes. Displaying the emotion publicly without explanation? Oh yeah. However, processing emotions in prayer? Communicating them to God? For most of us, that’s not usually our first inclination.

Yet, here we see Jesus in the New Testament experiencing a full range of emotions, joy in Luke 10:21 (Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit), anger in Matthew 21:12, sadness and grief in John 11 at the death of a close friend (Lazarus), loneliness and despair on the cross (My God, why have you forsaken me?), and compassion, love and forgiveness (“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing) in Luke 23:34. You know what is consistent in each example: He was praying as he experienced each emotion.

Jesus is simply echoing themes found in the Old Testament, particularly the Psalms. They are essentially poetry, music, and ancient journal entries. Others are full of sorrow, grief, and anger like Psalm 13. Others show downright despair and depression like in Psalm 88. All of it is said in prayer.

Here’s an action step/question for you to think about: how am I encouraging my student to process their emotions in prayer? How can I set an example for them in that? Maybe it’s journaling. Maybe it’s an intentional time of conversation a couple of times a week where you help them process their emotions externally (or give those who are introverted intentional time to process them internally). Maybe it’s praying more honest prayers. Maybe it’s simply reminding your student that God can handle ALL of your emotions, but at the end of the day, He is still worth trusting no matter how we feel.

Christianity has the absolute best teaching on emotions. It says you can have them. It’s so encouraging to me to know that these raw, heartfelt prayers exist in the Scriptures; even from God Himself in Jesus! Bible commentator, Derek Kidner, says it like this (and I love this): The very presence of such prayers in Scripture is a witness to His understanding. He knows how men speak when they are desperate. That, my friends, is the powerful grace of God when it comes to our emotions!

Discussion Questions

- Do you find it difficult to talk about your emotions? Why or why not?
- What role does God have in processing your emotions?
- What is one step you can take this week to process your emotions in prayer?